

# Dragonshards

## Demographics

By Keith Baker



Eberron draws on pulp adventure for inspiration. In pulp tales, the heroes are remarkable people with skills and abilities that set them apart from the common populace. Eberron attempts to replicate this flavor. In Eberron, an 18th-level character is the stuff of legends. If player characters reach this level of power, they will be among the greatest heroes in the world. There have been heroes with such power in the past, but most have fallen to the passage of time or passed away in the long war. The player characters have the potential to be the heroes of this age, and should the threat of Xoriat return or the Dreaming Dark finally make its move, the party may be the force that kings look to for aid.

Action points separate player characters from the masses. Aside from player characters, only the greatest villains and most important NPCs possess action points. Looking to a novel or movie, fortune often seems to favor the main characters, and this is the purpose of action points: to allow the party to shine even when facing opponents of equivalent power.

Player characters are also distinguished by their PC classes. Most nobles are aristocrats, not fighters and wizards. The typical soldier uses warrior levels, and a common priest is an expert or adept, not a cleric. The PC classes are more versatile and powerful than NPC classes: a wizard is far superior to a magewright, and a cleric outstrips an adept both in battle and in the ability to use divine magic. As a result, even a low-level character with a PC class is a remarkable individual. This does not mean that the characters are the only fighters and wizards in the world.

Just because the bulk of the population uses NPC classes doesn't mean that a DM has to use NPC classes for all of the people who challenge or oppose the party. Elite forces such as the warforged troops produced in the Last War, the artificers of House Cannith, or the assassins of House Thuranni can use PC classes, and there certainly are clerics in the Church of the Silver Flame in addition to experts and adepts. These people are remarkable individuals in their own right, and even at low levels they command respect from those around them. In a world where the average soldier is a 2nd-level warrior, a 5th-level fighter can be an important individual. This is the case in Eberron.

The important thing is that NPCs do not follow the same rules as PCs. They do not acquire experience and advance in levels as player characters do. It's perfectly possible for a Brelish soldier to spend 20 years fighting in the wars and still be a 2nd or 3rd-level warrior. This is not about realism; if it was, you'd never see any 20th-level characters, when you consider the superhuman level of skill this represents. This is about replicating the flavor of movies and novels in which heroes and villains stand far above the common folk. The supporting cast shouldn't overshadow the main characters.

### Challenging Adventurers

The relative scarcity of high-level NPCs is something that sets Eberron apart from many other published worlds. Some Dungeon Masters may feel that no forces can challenge a high-level party or keep them in check. In terms of enemies, foes exist that can pose a threat to even a 20th-level character. The Chamber can draw on the power of a nation of dragons. The Devourer of Dreams can pose a threat to an epic-level party. The Lords of

Dust are millions of years old and can be as powerful as the DM cares to make them. Should a 50-HD daelkyr ever escape from the seals of Khyber, it will put a dent in most adventurers' days. As described in Chapter Nine of the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, a DM should also consider recurring villains -- opponents who grow in power with the party. The Lord of Blades is only 12th-level now, so the party has a chance of fighting him and surviving. By the time the party members are 12th-level, he may be 15th; by the time they reach 20th level, he may be an epic foe.

Beyond mere monsters, it's important to remember that there is more to challenge and threat than level numbers. The dragonmark houses, Church of the Silver Flame, and royal family have influence and resources. Just because the characters are 18th level doesn't mean they should make enemies of House Thuranni; a group of 12th-level assassins with specialized equipment, careful strategy, and the advantage of surprise can wipe out a higher level group. A 1st-level innkeeper can put deadly poison in a drink. High-level characters can accomplish amazing feats but they should never become complacent about their mortality or overconfident of their invulnerability.

The flip side of this is that the PCs may find themselves in need of powerful allies. As noted above, level is not necessarily the key factor in determining the value of an ally. Even a 20th-level character can benefit from the magic items provided by House Cannith. More importantly, the concept of gray alignment in Eberron means that villains themselves may occasionally become allies. The goal of restricting powerful, benevolent NPCs in Eberron is to prevent the party and the world from relying on NPCs to solve their problems for them. If the party needs to forge a temporary alliance with the Daughters of Sora Kell or the Lord of Blades, that's good drama. How far do you trust your ally, and what happens when you cross paths again?

## Determining Class and Level

As a result of all of the factors mentioned above, the overall demographics of class and level in the world are different from those presented in Chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Characters who have more than twelve levels in a PC class are truly remarkable, even in the greatest cities of Khorvaire. As a result, when you are determining the highest-level character in an Eberron settlement, use the following tables in place of the ones in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

### Community Modifiers

Community Size	Community Modifier
Thorp	-3
Hamlet	-2
Village	-1
Small town	0
Large town	2
Small city	4
Large city	+6 (roll twice) 1
Metropolis	+8 (roll three times)1

1. Cities this large can have more than one high-level NPC per class, each of whom generates lower-level characters of the same class as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

## Highest-Level Locals

Class	Character Level
Adept	3d4 + community modifier
Aristocrat	2d4 + community modifier
Artificer3	1d3 + community modifier
Barbarian1	1d3 + community modifier
Bard	1d4 + community modifier
Cleric2	1d3 + community modifier
Commoner	4d4 + community modifier
Druid1	1d3 + community modifier
Expert	3d4 + community modifier
Fighter4	1d6 + community modifier
Magewright	3d4 + community modifier
Monk	1d3 + community modifier
Paladin2	1d3 + community modifier
Ranger1	1d3 + community modifier
Rogue	1d6 + community modifier
Sorcerer	1d3 + community modifier
Warrior	3d4 + community modifier
Wizard3	1d3 + community modifier

1. In areas where these classes are common, level is 1d8 + modifier, with a maximum value of 15. Druids are common in the Eldeen Reaches and the Shadow Marches. Rangers are typically found in the Eldeen Reaches, Shadow Marches, Talenta Plains, and Valenar. Barbarians can be found in the Demon Wastes, Darguun, Droaam, Eldeen Reaches, Shadow Marches, and Talenta Plains.
2. In Thrane, level is 1d6 + modifier. The culture of Thrane is closely tied to the Church of the Silver Flame, and many of its citizens hear the call of the Silver Flame.
3. In Aundair, level is 1d6 + modifier. In Karrnath, level is 1d4+modifier. Aundair is home to the Arcane Congress and celebrates mystics and artificers. The Twelve has its primary campus in Karrnath, and this results in a slightly higher level of mystical skill.
4. In Karrnath, level is 1d8 + modifier. Karrnath has the strongest martial tradition of the Five Nations, and the Rekkenmark Academy produces the finest officers in the land.

While high-level npcs and magic-users are rare in Eberron, the war and applied study of the arcane arts results in a wider spread of lower level characters. For this reason, in communities that are centers of commerce and craft, determine the highest-level NPC normally. The community will have twice as many characters of that class who are two levels below this level (11, 9, 7...), and twice as many 1st-level characters as 2nd-level characters. The remainder of the population should be divided into 1st-level characters as follows: 90% commoners, 5%

warriors, 3% experts, 1% magewrights, and 1% divided equally between adepts and aristocrats.

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